

Wilder Ranch - Granary
1401 Coast Road
Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz County
California

HABS No. CA-2274-D

HABS
CAL,
44-SACRU,
3-D-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

WILDER RANCH - GRANARY

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Location: 1401 Coast Road, Santa Cruz County, California; two miles north of Santa Cruz on the coast side of State Highway 1.

Present Owner/Occupant: State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation

Present Use: This building is part of a 22-acre cultural preserve at Wilder Ranch State Park that interprets dairying and ranch life along California's coast.

Significance: Wilder Ranch State Park's ranch buildings, while representative of rural vernacular architecture, reflect a century of traditions associated with innovative and progressive dairy ranching in California.

Wilder and four succeeding generations of his family were quick to adopt the newly developed cream-separator and the majority of the machinery was water powered using a Pelton wheel and a belt-drive system, including the electrification of the dairy in the 1890s. In the 1930s the emphasis at the ranch shifted from milk to beef stock, as well as thoroughbred horses and artichoke production.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Ca. 1879-92. It is not illustrated in W.W. Elliott's 1879 drawing of the ranch, but the narrow outline of its roof can be seen in E.S. Harrison's 1892 drawing. It is probable that D.D. Wilder built this structure when he expanded the cow herd and enlarged the cow barn ca. 1885-92.
2. Original and subsequent owners: The history of Wilder Ranch can be traced back to California's Mexican period. Once known as Rancho Refugio, in 1836 the land was granted by the Mexican government to the three Castro sisters: Candida, Jacinta and Maria de Los Angeles Castro. Candida had married Joseph Bolcoff, a naturalized Mexican citizen of Russian-Siberian birth. Bolcoff's name is not mentioned in the original grant, but in 1849-50 he took control of Rancho Refugio. Bolcoff hoped to disenfranchise Jacinta and Maria in order to clear the claims of Joseph "Jose" Majors, who had married Maria in 1839. Majors had been selling Rancho Refugio property which he did not own since 1848.

Bolcoff sold "undivided interests" in parcels of Refugio to Moses A. Meder (often spelled Meader in public records) from 1850 to 1856. Meder bought and sold parcels, and brought his son-in-law, Thomas B. Hart, into the arrangement. Upon Bolcoff's death, under tremendous legal pressure, his sons sold all their rights to a Charles E. Norton. By that time, perhaps twenty persons, companies, and law firms held claims

against Rancho Refugio.

In 1866, Moses A. Meder, et. al, took Norton to court to prove their claims on the lower two-thirds of Rancho Refugio. Norton claimed an undivided interest from the Bolcoff estate. Meder represented Samuel Adams, Albion P. Jordan, Isaac E. Davis, Robert F. Peckham, Adna A. Hecox, Thomas Courtis, Maria O. de Cadiz, Santa Cruz Petroleum Oil Works Company, Richard F. Ryan, George Pace, Richard W. Linton, George Parsons, Manuel L. Brockelbank, W.W. Broughton, Henry Rice, Joaquin R. Majors, George Caldwell, David Caldwell, Daniel Caldwell, R.E. Merrill, E. Bender, and Henry Ryan. A master counsellor appointed by the court reported that none of the above were bona fide purchasers, but that Meder did legally own a two-thirds interest in his purchase as well as Jordan and Davis; and that Thomas Courtis did, in good faith, give a quit claim to Santa Cruz Petroleum Oil Works, but that he did not legally own the full undivided interest he sold or transferred.

By the late 1860s, the courts were untangling enough of the legal mess of the eastern two-thirds of Rancho Refugio to allow John T. Fairbanks of Sonoma County and Richard H. Hall to begin buying up claims against the property. In 1870, Fairbanks and Hall were able to acquire all of Meder's various claims upon the ranch, plus other leases and liens, including what is now the area of the cultural preserve. Hall then sold his entire interest to Fairbanks. In May 1871, Fairbanks sold his interest to Levi K. Baldwin of Santa Cruz and Deloss D. Wilder of Sonoma County. The two men established (or continued) five dairies on the property. Wilder and Baldwin's purchase encompassed well over 4,000 acres in two distinct parcels.

In 1885, Baldwin and Wilder dissolved their partnership and divided the acreage into "upper" and "lower" ranches. Wilder obtained the "lower" 2,330 acres, including the present state park cultural preserve area, for \$32,000.

The Wilder family owned the property for nearly a century until July 1969, when it was sold to the Moroto Investment Company, Ltd., a subsidiary of Sussman Properties, Ltd., of Toronto, Canada.

The California State Department of Parks and Recreation acquired the cultural preserve area along with the beaches, coastal benchlands and uplands of Wilder Ranch in 1974 to establish Wilder Ranch State Park.

3. Original plans and construction: No original plans or drawings of the building have been located.
4. Alterations and additions: The granary's location next to Wilder Creek has made it vulnerable to flooding. At some point the entire structure was raised several feet. The first floor was reached by a short ladder.

B. Historical Context: The granary was conveniently located between the horse barn and cow barn. This was the second of two such buildings originally built on

the ranch. Here the Wilders would store grain and other crops and equipment. On occasion, a Pelton wheel was employed to operate some of the machinery in the granary, including a "Benecia" bean huller.

Enterprise and ingenuity have marked the dairy operations at Wilder Ranch from its earliest years. All owners adapted quickly to new machinery, such as the cream-separator and the Pelton wheel, and discoveries, such as electricity, that were constantly refining and streamlining the dairy industry.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The granary is a simple gabled, vernacular structure with a pediment detail on its south face. It echoes the Queen Anne influence seen on the more elaborate Melvin Wilder house, as well as the more modest details of the nearby shops/bunkhouse and horse barn.
2. Condition of the fabric: Poor; the damp coastal climate, flooding and insects have damaged this structure. Areas of the first and second floors are unsafe to walk upon and the roof leaks.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 30'-4" x 26'-4".
2. Foundations: Concrete piers that support 6" x 6" posts.
3. Walls: All building facades are whitewashed board and batten. The south/front facade has 14" width boards with 2-1/2" battens, while the remaining three facades have 10" width boards with 3" battens.
4. Structural system, framing: The post-and-beam construction is 6" x 6" posts at the south and north facades (front and rear), with 4" x 4" posts on the east and west facades. There are 4" x 3" lateral supports. A central 6" x 8" beam runs the width of the structure, with 2" x 12" ceiling joists and 2" x 6" rafters.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are two sliding doors on the south facade: an 8' x 87" on the first floor and a 8' x 84" on the second floor.
 - b. Windows: There is a 9" x 12" window on the northwest corner of the first floor's north facade and a double-hung-sash on the west

facade of the second floor.

6. Roof: Shape, covering: The side-gabled roof is red composition shingles with a short cross gable centered above the central doors on the south/front facade.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Both floors are open space.
 - a. First floor: The sliding door is centered on the south facade. A bean huller and remnants of a drive pulley system once used with a Pelton wheel are on the east wall.
 - b. Second floor: A sliding door centered on the south facade once allowed feed grains and other materials to be moved easily in and out of the structure.
2. Stairways: A stairway with 32-1/2"width treads is on the interior west wall. A ladder is east of the sliding door.
3. Flooring: The first floor boards are 1" x 5-1/2";the second floor boards are 1" x 5-1/4".
4. Hardware: Metal door slide hardware.
5. Mechanical equipment: A "Benecia" bean huller runs the length of the east wall and has a drive pulley.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The granary is one of three buildings facing south along an east-west unpaved drive. Immediately west is the horse barn and slightly southeast is the cow barn. A creamery once stood opposite the granary on the south side of the drive. Originally, there were several Pelton wheels in this structure.
2. Historic landscape design: Several corrals are located immediately next to the granary on the north and west sides. Wilder Creek runs east of the building before disappearing beneath the cow barn. An unpaved drive runs in front of the south facade. A low shed structure used for pigs was east and adjacent to the granary; it no longer exists.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: None have been located.

- B. Early Views: There are several early photographic views and drawings of the ranch complex contained in the collections of the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Office of Interpretive Services in Sacramento, the California State Library, the Santa Cruz Public Library and the University of California at Santa Cruz Library. Among the images at the Department of Parks and Recreation is a view looking east along the unpaved driveway toward the creamery. It shows the south facade of the granary, horse barn and shops/bunkhouse, as well as the creamery (Scat, a dog, is leaping from a buggy into Melvin Wilder's arms in the foreground of the picture).
- C. Bibliography: See HABS No. CA-2274-A, Horse Barn.

Prepared by: Mary A. Helmich
State Park Interpreter II
Office of Interpretive Services
California Department of Parks and Recreation
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Steve Radosevich
State Park Interpreter I
Office of Interpretive Services
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Fall 1989

Jimmy D. Jackson, A.I.A.
Senior Architect
Development Division
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Fall 1989

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

This project was undertaken for the California Department of Parks and Recreation by the Historic American Buildings Survey, under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief HABS/HAER Division, and Kenneth L. Anderson, chief of HABS. The survey team was composed of project supervisor Christian D. Overby (University of Kansas) and architectural technicians Alexandra Kettles (US/ICOMOS-University of Edinburgh), Shelley Milling (Mississippi State University), and Steve Eccher (University of Colorado).